



## **Policy Foundation of Maryland**

**Committee:** Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs & Budget & Taxation

**Testimony on:** SB0135-- Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ)

**SPONSOR:** **Senator Benjamin Kramer**

**Organization:** Policy Foundation of Maryland, Rebuild Maryland Coalition

**Person Submitting:** **Sarahia Benn (Executive Dir.)**

**Position:** **Favorable**

**Hearing Date:** February 15, 2022

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of SB0135. Policy Foundation of Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts Black, Brown, marginalized, low income communities and veterans affairs. Environmental legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historically and currently.

### **Why is CCEJ IMPORTANT?:**

- Reduces harm & protects Marginalized, most vulnerable, and low income Marylanders
- Embrace the green economy
- Transition away from fossil fuel jobs to high paying green energy jobs
- CCEJ will place a fee on all imported fossil fuels.
- The fossil fuel fee on fossil fuels shall be collected at the first point of sale and by the entity transporting the fossil fuel into the state.
- Generate millions of dollars for investment in clean energy infrastructure
- Allow local jurisdictions to invest up to approximately \$500,000 dollars in a climate plan

## Objectives of the CCEJ:

- Reduce emissions 60% from 2006 levels by 2030;
- Reduce emissions 100% from 2006 levels by 2040; and
- Achieve negative emissions after 2040.
- Two funds will be created with the revenue generated from the pollution fees:: Household & Employer Benefit Fund And Climate Crisis Infrastructure fund
- CCEJ requires the Department of the Environment to establish a Climate Crisis Council to develop a plan to achieve emissions reductions targets.
- Climate Crisis Council will establish the Fee and Investment Initiative that will help fund actions to reduce emissions, enhance resilience to climate impacts, and ensure an equitable transition for workers and communities that depend on fossil fuels

Low income neighborhoods have experienced the negative impacts of pollution over centuries due to industrialization and other factors in the environment. [Pollution](#) and the effects of pollution in studies about [emissions, poor air quality](#), lead poisoning, and other environmental crises impact children's educational outcomes. Any type of exposure to pollutants in schools or the general environment can negatively impact on mental state, test scores, their ability to focus, and/or consistently attend school.

Locally just a few years ago Harford County was proposing to build a tire pyrolysis recycling factory located within 5 miles of 6 schools in Black, Brown, and marginalized communities and schools. It was defeated but imagine if there had been CCEJ in place the fight would not have been so overwhelming and costly to local activists who are under-resourced.

The major benefit of CCEJ is that these generational issues that have long gone unaddressed can now receive help through the CCEJ Climate Crisis Benefit Fund & Infrastructure Fund to address the harm to the marginalized communities and the communities schools.

Air pollution from burning fossil fuels is causing massive health impacts in marginalized communities such as cancer, environmental asthma, lung disease, and heart disease. There are hotspots clearly located all over Maryland that have high incidences of these health impacts based on excessive air pollution. CCEJ

would address the inequity in addressing Communities of color, low income and moderate communities that are disproportionately negatively impacted by such environmental attacks through air pollution and other environmental crises.

Finally, CCEJ will provide funding to low and moderate income families as well as local governments to create and implement climate action plans to reduce GHG emissions. This bill economically as well as environmentally addresses a significant portion of Maryland's climate problem. It also begins to address the many centuries of climate crisis inequity in Marginalized communities.

For these reasons and more, I urge a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on **SB0135**.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarahia Benn  
(Policy Foundation of Maryland, Rebuild Maryland Coalition)

**(Dedicated to Black History month)**

“We can be joyful while we’re trying to change the world. As long we’re also aware that you can’t get away with things just by doing the easy stuff. You actually have to challenge certain things and put yourself in uncomfortable positions, often risking things in order to achieve real change.”

[Karen Washington, Community Gardener, The Bronx, NY](#)